

Philosophy 221/Political Science 221  
**Philosophical Foundations of the American Revolution**

Fall 2013  
Bausch and Lomb 269, TuTh 11:05-12:20

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Hours: T 8:30-9:30, R 12:30-1:30 and by appointment  
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In this course, we will study the American Revolution by examining the political theory which sparked the revolution itself and which lay behind the writing of the Constitution. We will begin by looking at the important predecessors to the revolution, particularly the works of John Locke, the Baron de Montesquieu, and David Hume. We will then consider important works from the period surrounding the revolution, including works by Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson. Finally, we will look at the debates surrounding the adoption of the U.S. Constitution, including the *Federalist Papers* and important anti-Federalist works.

The eighteenth century was a time of remarkable intellectual activity in the West, and the Americans played a central role in it, both reflecting the thought in Europe and influencing the course of thoughts and events there. Although it was over 200 years ago, the eighteenth century was a modern period: their concerns are largely our concerns. But since they come from a different background, they approach these concerns in a different and (I hope) illuminating way. So we want to examine these ideas in their context, but we also want to see what these thinkers can tell us about the role and nature of government and of society.

**Texts**

David Hume, *Essays: Moral, Political and Literary* (Liberty Classics)  
Thomas Jefferson, *Political Writings* (Cambridge)  
John Locke, *Letter concerning Toleration* (Hackett)  
John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government* (Hackett)  
Montesquieu, *Selected Political Writings* (Hackett)  
Thomas Paine, *Political Writings* (Cambridge)  
David Wooton, ed. *The Essential Federalist and Anti-Federalist Papers* (Hackett)

Most of these texts are available online, and for many you can find the edition we are using online as well for a very reasonable price (Check the "Textbooks" link on the Blackboard page for the class). It will be easiest for us to discuss the texts if everyone is referring to the same text.

*Recommended:*

I recommend that you read a short general history of the revolutionary period as a background for our discussion of the Revolution and the debates about the Constitution. I have ordered Gordon Wood's *The American Revolution* (Modern Library, 2003) for that purpose, but any good general history will do.

**Course requirements**

The following is a list of the assignments required to complete the course and their approximate due dates. The course grade is divided into 520 points, apportioned as shown:

First tutorial	Oct 9	120 points
Second tutorial	Nov 12	120 points
Final assignment	Dec 11	150 points
Reaction papers		30 points
Participation		100 points

Class participation, you will note, is a *significant* part of your grade. This class will be conducted as a seminar, and so participation is expected. Everyone should come to class prepared to discuss the readings—or at least, to ask questions about it. In addition, three times during the term, I expect you to send me a one-page reflection by e-mail of about some aspect of that week's readings, due Monday at 10:00 p.m. These papers should respond to some specific arguments or position in the readings by explaining why you agree or disagree with it. For these reaction papers, the class is divided into three groups, determined by the first letter of your last name:

Group 1	A-H
Group 2	I-Q
Group 3	R-Z

The major assignments in this course will be done using a tutorial system. I will give you a series of questions about particular texts, and I will ask you to respond to them in a paper of 6-8 pages. You and another student will meet with me in my office during the week set aside for that purpose. Together, the three of us will discuss each of your papers. While attending a tutorial is required, you will be graded only on what is in your paper. I will explain the tutorial method in more detail later.

For your final assignment, you will have a choice: you may either write a third tutorial of 8-10 pages on a topic I will give you, or you may write an 8-10 page paper on a topic of your own choosing. This latter option will give you the opportunity to explore an issue of particular interest to you at greater length. Note that the paper must be a *philosophy* paper: it should explain and evaluate a line of argument that is important to the political philosophy in this period. It can *not* be a research paper on the people or the period, or even on the controversies of the day. I will be happy, however, to help you develop your topic. In any case, if you choose to write a paper, you *must* consult me.

Writing students: The students taking the course for writing credit have the same assignments as the other students with two exceptions. First, they will rewrite each of the first two tutorials, taking into account my comments and new insights they have about the issues.

Each rewrite will be worth 100 points. In addition, they will write reaction papers with both groups 1 and 3, so the reaction will be worth 60 points. The total possible points is then, 750 points.

### Schedule of Readings

The schedule is (of course) tentative. References to *The Essential Federalist and Anti-Federalist Papers* are abbreviated EFA. The number below the date indicates the group number whose reflection is due on the Monday of that week.

#### *I. Theoretical background to revolution*

- Sep 3-5                      Introduction  
Joseph Addison, *Cato: A Tragedy*
- Sep 10-12                    John Locke, *Letter concerning Toleration*  
(3)                              Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, chs. I-V (5-30)
- Sep 17-19                    Locke, *Second Treatise*, chs. X-XIX (30-124)  
(1)
- Sep 24-26                    Montesquieu, "Myth of the Troglodytes," and *Spirit of the Laws*, Books  
(2)                              I-V, VIII-IX, XI, XIX, XXIV, XXV in *Selected Political Writings*  
(pp. 55-64, 109-94, 206-28, 230-42)
- Oct 1-3                        David Hume, "Of the Liberty of the Press," in *Essays: Moral, Political,*  
*and Literary*, 9-13, 604-05  
"Of the First Principles of Government," 32-36  
"Of the Origin of Government," 37-41  
"Of the Independence of Parliament," 42-46  
"Of Parties in General," 54-63  
"Of the Parties in Great Britain," 64-72  
"Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences," 111-37  
"Of the Original Contract," 465-87  
"Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth," 512-29
- Oct 8-10                      *Fall break, October 8*  
• First tutorial (no class, Oct 10)

#### *II. The Revolution*

- Oct 15-17                    Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, in *Political Writings*, 1-38  
(3)                              *The Declaration of Independence*, in Jefferson, *Political Writings* pp. 96-  
102  
Thomas Hutchinson, "Strictures upon the Declaration of the Congress at  
Philadelphia" (Blackboard)

- Oct 22-24  
(1) Paine, *The Crisis, Number 1*, in *Political Writings*, 39-48  
Thomas Jefferson, "A Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom," 1777  
(390-92)  
Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 1785, Queries XIV, XVII-XVIII  
(474-80, 392-96, 480-82)  
Jefferson, Letter to Maria Cosway, 1786, "Dialogue between My Heart  
and My Head," (10-21)  
Jefferson, Letter to James Madison, 1787 (107-09)  
Jefferson, Letter to William Stephens Smith, 1787 (109-11)  
Jefferson, Letter to Peter Carr, 1787 (252-56)  
Jefferson, Address to the Danbury Baptist Association, 1802 (396-97)  
Jefferson, Letter to Benjamin Rush, 1803 (266-70)

### III. The Constitution

- Oct 29-31  
(2) Articles of Confederation (EFA 317-24)  
The Virginia Plan (EFA 324-26)  
United States Constitution (EFA 326-37)  
George Mason, *Objections to the Constitution* (EFA 1-3)  
Address of the Pennsylvania Minority (EFA 3-24)  
Jefferson, Letter to James Madison, in *Political Writings*, 360-63  
Speech of Patrick Henry (EFA 25-41)  
Speeches of Melancton Smith (EFA 42-58)
- Nov 5-7  
(3) "Cato," nos. 4-5 (EFA 58-65)  
"Centinel," no. 1 (EFA 65-74)  
"Brutus," nos. 6, 11, 12, 15 (EFA 74-96)  
*Federalist Papers* 1-2, 6-14 (EFA 140-83)
- Nov 12-14  
• Second tutorial (No classes)
- Nov 19-21  
(1) *Federalist Papers* 15-16, 23-24, 28, 31, 33, 35, 39, 47-52, 55, 57, 62-63  
(EFA 183-275)
- Nov 28-30  
Federalist Papers 70, 78, 83-85 (EFA 275-316)  
*No class, Nov 23 (Thanksgiving break)*
- Dec 3-5  
(2) James Madison, "Speech Introducing Proposed Constitutional  
Amendments" and "Debate on First Amendment Language"  
(Blackboard)  
Amendments sent to the states by the First Congress (Blackboard)  
Bill of Rights (EFA 337-38)

Dec 10-12

Jefferson, Letter to James Madison, 1789 and Madison, Letter to Thomas  
Jefferson, 1790, both in Jefferson, *Political Writings*, 593-98, 605-09

- Third tutorial/Third assignment (No class, Dec 12)